

British Rule in India Is Confronted With Its Gravest Crisis

Moplah Revolt Adds Many New Complications

Muslim-Hindu Religious Conflict, However, Weakens Gandhi Scheme and Opens Way for Military

By William L. McPherson

RECENT dispatches from India emphasize the seriousness of the Moplah revolt in Malabar and western Madras. Yet this insurrection may come as something of a relief to the Indian authorities. It ends a period of nervous tension. The Indian government knows how to deal with armed insurrection. It has had long experience with local native uprisings. But it has been puzzled to meet the passive resistance which has been gathering head in India since the war, and which has been organized and inspired by a leader of extraordinary character and genius. If, as is reported, the Muslim fanatics of the Malabar coast are making religious war on the Hindus, after the manner of the ancient Moslem conquerors, the anti-English alliance of these two native elements may fall to pieces and the Delhi government may successfully resume the policy of ruling its Indian subjects by keeping them divided.

The uprising in Malabar began late in August. The Moplahs, a Mahometan tribe concerned in it, are religious zealots, with a strong infusion of Arab blood. They flew a green flag bearing a Turkish emblem, according to the first dispatches coming from Calicut, the capital of the Malabar province. This fact indicates pretty clearly the motives behind the disturbance, at least in its initial stages.

Dual Allegiance Is Cause Of Moplah Uprisings

The Mahometans of India, who number 60,000,000—about one-sixth of the population—have two allegiances, one political, the other spiritual. They are subjects of the Emperor of India, who is also the King of Great Britain and Ireland. They are religious adherents of the Caliph of Islam, who is also the Sultan of Turkey. Trouble comes when two such allegiances get tangled up. The great mutiny of 1857 was caused by the belief of the Sepoys that the cartridges which they bit were greased with hog fat—an offense to their religious habits and instincts. The new Moslem discontent in India is due to a belief that the British government has unfairly treated the head of the Moslem faith.

The Indian Mahometans gave their support to the government during the World War, although Turkey joined the Central Powers. Thousands of Mahometan troops fought on the western front in Europe in 1914, and later in Egypt, in East Africa, in Palestine and in Mesopotamia. They distinguished themselves in fighting against the Sultan of Turkey and warring against the Caliph of Islam. They claim to have received assurances from the Indian and British governments that whatever peace terms were made the Caliphate would not be dishonored or overturned.

After the Treaty of Sevres was signed and the Sultan was reduced to a mere figurehead, marooned in Constantinople, the Indian Muslims flocked to the standard of the All India Caliphate movement. These two extremists had parted even before the war an All-India Moslem League. They were pro-Turk and sympathized, apparently, with the Pan-Turanian doctrines preached by the Young Turks in Constantinople. They didn't have the bulk of the Moslem population with them. But dissatisfaction with the Sevres Treaty played into their hands, and they also strengthened themselves greatly by linking up their anti-government agitation with the extraordinary Hindu anti-government agitation conducted by Gandhi, India's "monk politician," the most revered and powerful nationalist leader in India today.

All Brothers Arrested And Held for Trial

The government was not slow to connect the Malabar revolt with the activities of the two brothers, Mahomed Ali and Shaukat Ali. Shaukat Ali was arrested on September 14 in northern Madras. Mahomed Ali was arrested on the same day in Bombay, at the central office of the Caliphate committee. They were both taken to Karachi for trial on charges of criminal conspiracy, based on their speeches at the All-India Caliphate Conference in that city on July last, and on the resolutions passed by the conference. One of these resolutions declared "it to be unlawful for any Moslem to enlist in the Indian army or to remain in it to encourage others to enlist."

The Ali brothers are sons of a small land owner in the state of Rampur. The late, Shaukat, was formerly an employee in the opium department. The younger, Mahomed, was graduated from Aligarh University in 1898. He went to England to compete for entry into the Indian civil service, but failed to pass the examinations. He returned home, held a subordinate position for a few years in the Baroda state administration and then left it to become an anti-government journalist and propagandist.

Both brothers were interned in 1915 as enemy sympathizers. The government offered them a parole on condition that they "would refrain from doing anything which might be regarded as reasonably likely to assist the enemies of the King." But they refused the offer because they were allowed to add the proviso, "with prejudice to our allegiance to the King." In June, 1919, they were imprisoned because of their disloyal attitude with regard to the war with Afghanistan, in which the Indian government had become involved. Released at the end of 1919, they

resumed their pro-Turkish propaganda. Mahomed was elected leader of the Caliphate delegation which visited England in 1920 and had interviews with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for India, in which they asked for a larger recognition of the Sultan's position as head of the Moslem world. A few months later the brothers engineered an exodus of Indian Mahometans to Afghanistan, which ended disastrously for the immigrants.

Last May the government decided to prosecute them for speeches which were held to be incitements to violence. The brothers had accepted to Gandhi's program of "non-violent non-cooperation" with the government. But they were hot-blooded and passionate men and incapable of the mental and moral restraint exhibited by the Hindu mahatma (saint) and ascetic. Gandhi appealed to Lord Reading, the Viceroy, on their behalf. The brothers then signed an agreement apologizing for some of their remarks and promised that they "would not directly or indirectly advocate violence at present or in the future, nor create an atmosphere of preparedness for violence." The prosecution was then dropped. How poorly they kept their promises is shown in the recent proceedings at the Karachi All-India Caliphate conference and in the outbreak in Malabar.

Treaty of Sevres Caused Racial and Religious Ferment

The Treaty of Sevres and the racial and religious ferment it started in India set the Moslems against British rule and brought them into alliance with Gandhi. The Hindus have different grievances, political in character rather than religious.

The war upset the old balance in India. The empire, for its great military services, was recognized by Great Britain as a nation, on a par with the self-governing dominions. India took a seat at the peace conference alongside of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. She signed the treaty in her own right. But it was really the Indian government, not the Indian people, which was thus recognized. India is not self-governing. Great Britain has only recently introduced self-government in a very rudimentary form.

The Indian is confused. He was led to believe that the war was fought in defense of the principle of nationality. He heard the phrase "self-determination" used on many occasions, often heedlessly and unwisely. He began to apply the war aims of the Allies, as stated by themselves, to his own political situation. The educated Hindu has imbibed the ideas of Western democracy. He looks forward to nationality, to political self-control, to freedom of speech and of the press and to the equal administration of justice. He tries to puzzle out why these things, which are workable for the Western world, are not considered workable for him.

Pierre Mille Pictures Some Conditions in India

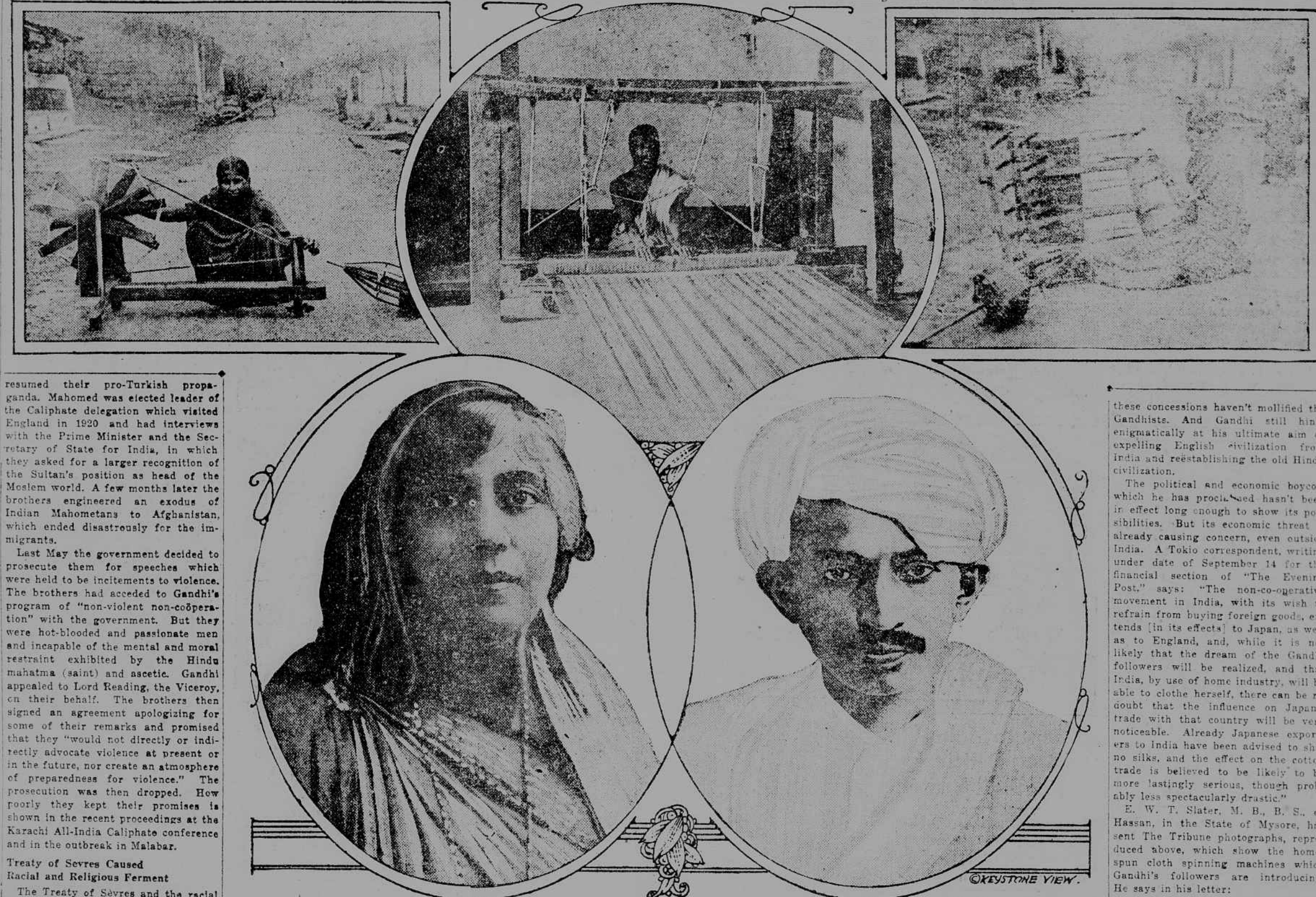
In a short story, "The Bomb and the Judge," published in The Tribune on September 11 last, Pierre Mille, who knows the East as few other writers do, pictured incidentally some of the conditions of which Indian natives complain. Of the judge who figured in the title, he said:

"Three times a week he goes to his court and judges there, with equal conscientiousness and celerity, all the cases that are brought before him. He is to be judged and as they ought to be judged. I mean to say that if any case concerns the empire he makes the decision the most advantageous to the empire. If it is one between an English functionary and a native he imposes the severest penalty on the latter, if he is in the least in the wrong, in order to make him respect the white man's superiority. If the white man is in the wrong the judge advises him to settle the matter discreetly out of court like a gentleman. If not he will suffer at the club—at the hands of his fellow white men—a punishment more painful even than death. But when the litigation concerns two Hindus the honorable John sends it as quickly as possible to a Hindu judge, who generally decides in favor of the richer and against the poorer. Long experience has shown that this is best for the security of the empire, the rich having more friends, and justice consisting, if one wishes still to consider the interests of the empire, in making the fewest possible malecontents."

Again Mille Says:

"But we know very well that in recent years the detestable doctrines of European revolutionaries have been introduced into India. There have been famines, of which the people have a horrible memory, forgetting that without the English, lack of foresight on the part of the native sovereigns would have made these famines even more terrible. There have been also the Japanese victories. Then the war—the Great War and books—Moreover, there is the idea, which is British and also French, of the right of nations to self-government through a parliament. English Liberals have had the imprudence to spread instruction

Symbols of the Passive Revolt in India and Two of Its Leaders



The three photographs at the top show the cloth spinning machines used by the Indians in the boycott of foreign goods, which is the latest manifestation of the revolt. Below are Gandhi, the Hindu mystic and pacifist and Lala Singh, a feminist leader.

In these matters among the younger Hindus.

To make a long story short, some of these young Hindus delivered subversive speeches and wrote in their own language books, pamphlets and newspaper articles in which they denounced in vague but ardent terms a thing called liberty. When they were brought before his tribunal John Hertford always punished them severely, always in the interest of the empire. He did this all the more sincerely because his interpreter's translation of their writings inspired him with a very mediocre opinion of this sort of literature. It was grandiloquent, and confused, cited few facts and abounded in lyrical or abusive expressions, of which the judge himself had little comprehension beyond that they were in bad taste and had an unpleasant nationalist taint. He didn't know that at the beginning of a popular movement phrases which are worn, commonplace or vulgar may conceal genuine feeling."

The Indian government is not unaware of the causes of discontent which have given strength to the Caliphate and the "non-cooperation" Gandhi movements. The British government recently set up an Indian legislative assembly, chosen by a very restricted electorate. In his address to this body a few weeks ago Lord Reading, the Viceroy, referred to "the differences in the legal procedure applicable to Europeans and Indians" and promised to have them eliminated. The legislative assembly has been considering a bill "to remove all racial distinctions between Europeans and Indians in the matter of trial or punishment for criminal offenses." Its Committee on Repressive Laws has recommended the repeal of the stringent Rowlett act limiting freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly. It has also recommended the repeal of the defense of India act, imposing other war-time restrictions.

These are, of course, only first steps toward a substitution of a milder representative system for the old order of practically unlimited authority. Lord Reading was sent to India as a pacificator. And there was dire need of such a mission, in view of the blunders of the preceding régime, culminating in the massacre at Amritsar.

Returned Several Medals as Protest Against British Policy

He was imprisoned, with his wife and children, and went on a hunger strike. He was forcibly fed, long before that process was tried on English militant suffragists. But he continued his agitation for years, and at last, in 1913, he compelled the South African government to repeal most of the obnoxious laws discriminating against Indian labor. Yet all this time he remained a loyal British subject. He suspended "non-cooperation" during the Boer War. He received a medal for his services as assistant superintendent of the Indian Volunteer Stretcher Corps during the Boer War and another medal for his work as the head of the Indian Volunteer Corps in 1903. The Indian government gave him the Kasteri-Hind gold medal for his humanitarian work in South Africa. All these decorations he has returned as a protest against the present Indian policy of the British government.

Gandhi's policy is one of abstention. He wants all Indian civilian officials to refuse to serve any longer under the government. He asks all teachers to quit the government schools and to set up independent native schools. He urges all lawyers to give up practice in the courts and all litigants to settle differences elsewhere. He advises the Indians to refuse to vote or to have anything to do with the new and limited representative government.

On the economic side he urges the natives to abstain from the use of alcohol or of tea or sugar, since these articles are under government monopolies. The Indians are to boycott European goods and to make their own homespun clothing. Gandhi himself long ago stopped wearing European clothes and resumed the simplest native garb. He always goes barefoot. His program eventually is to be extended to include refusal to serve in the army or the government police or to pay taxes. The first of these is no longer beyond its present scope, for on October 5 last Gandhi joined with forty-seven other Nationalist leaders in issuing a proclamation declaring it to be contrary to the national dignity for an Indian to serve the British government as a soldier.

Gandhi himself defined his political aims in an "Open Letter to Every Englishman in India," which he published in 1920 and which is reproduced in part by W. W. Pearson, in a recent article in "The Asian Review." It says:

"Let me introduce myself to you. In my humble opinion no Indian has co-operated with the British government more than I have for an unbroken period of twenty-five years in the face of circumstances that might well have turned any other man into a rebel. I ask you to believe me when I tell you that my co-operation was not based on the fear of punishments provided by your laws or any other selfish motives. It was free and voluntary co-operation, based on the belief that the sum total of the activity of the British government was for the benefit of India. I put my life in peril four times for the sake of the empire. I did all this in the full belief that acts such as mine must gain for my country an equal status in the empire. So late as last December (1919) I pleaded for a trustful co-operation. I fully believed that Mr. Lloyd George would redeem the promise to the Mussulmans and that to you, I prophesy that it will pierce the Punjab would secure full reparations for the Punjab. But the treachery of Mr. Lloyd George and his appreciation by you and the condemnation of the Punjab activities have completely shattered my faith in the good intentions of the government and the nation which is supporting it."

"I know you would not mind if we could fight and wrest the sceptre from your hands. You know that we are powerless to do that, for you have ensured our incapacity to fight in open and honorable battle. Bravery on the battlefield is impossible for us. Bravery of the soul still remains open to us. I know that you will respond to this plea. I am engaged in evolving that bravery. Non-cooperation means nothing less than training in self-sufficiency. Why should we co-operate with you when we know that by your administration of this great country we are being daily enslaved to an increasing degree?"

"This response of the people to my appeal is not due to my personality. You are in search of a remedy to suppress this rising ebullition of national feeling. I venture to suggest to you that the only way to suppress it is to remove the cause. You have set the power. You can repent of the wrongs done to Indians. You can compel Mr. Lloyd George to redeem his promises. I assure you he has kept many escape doors. You can compel the Viceroy to retire in favor of a better one. You can revise your ideas about Sir Michael O'Dwyer and General Dyer. You can compel the government to sum-

mon a conference of the recognized leaders of the people, duly elected by them and representing all shades of opinion so as to devise a means for granting Swaraj (self-government) in accordance with the wishes of the people of India. The other solution, namely, repression, is open on the revelations of the official atrocity."

The British government did modify its repressive policy. Lord Harding was replaced as Viceroy. General Dyer was disciplined. The Rowlett act, which the Indians call the "black cobra act," is likely to be repealed. But

these concessions haven't mollified the Gandhists. And Gandhi still hints enigmatically at his ultimate aim of expelling English civilization from India and reestablishing the old Hindu civilization.

The political and economic boycott which he has proclaimed hasn't been in effect long enough to show its possibilities. But its economic threat is already causing concern, even outside India. A Tokyo correspondent, writing under date of September 14 for the financial section of "The Evening Post," says: "The non-co-operative movement in India, with its wish to refrain from buying foreign goods, extends [in its effects] to Japan, as well as to England, and while it is not likely that the dream of the Gandhi followers will be realized, and that India, by use of home industry, will be able to clothe herself, there can be no doubt that the influence on Japan's trade with that country will be very noticeable. Already Japanese exporters to India have been advised to ship no silks, and the effect on the cotton trade is believed to be likely to be more lasting serious, though probably less spectacularly drastic."

E. W. T. Slater, M. B., B. S., of Hassan, in the State of Mysore, has sent The Tribune photographs, reproduced above, which show the homespun cloth spinning machines which Gandhi's followers are introducing. He says in his letter:

"At the present time one of the most curious movements in history is being led by a Mr. Gandhi, an Indian leader, a man of great personality. He has laid hold of the imagination of the Indian people, and though his schemes are wild and impracticable, he has succeeded in persuading a large section of the population that the country's salvation lies in following the schemes he advocates."

"Of the ideas he has worked out the one of greatest interest, and now being put into practice by a section, at least, is the boycott of foreign goods, American as well as British and Japanese. The fact that the supplies of cotton goods, for instance, that can be made by the Indian mills is not sufficient to clothe

Gandhi Plan of Non-Resistance Balks Officials

Refusal of Population to Co-operate in Any Way With India Government Is the Greatest Problem

one-half the people does not seem to count, and huge bonfires are being held, in which thousands of dollars' worth of cloth are destroyed. "Mr. Gandhi's solution of the question is the development of home spinning and weaving, and the consequent, the national institution, which is the leading force in Indian politics, has sanctioned the scheme. He has brought forward for introducing 2,000,000 such spinning wheels as are shown in the accompanying photograph. Along with this there has to be a proportionate increase in weaving machines, etc. He is trying to persuade India to go back 200 years, and apparently a large section are quite prepared to do so. Mr. Gandhi, who is nothing, if not extravagant and idealistic, declares that it is because people wear foreign clothes that the men have lost their manliness and the women their virtue. The development of hand-spinning will restore these. It is seriously contemplated that such a scheme will completely oust all American and British goods from the market."

"The whole thing is chimerical, but the fact has to be recognized that the most advanced leaders in the country believe, or declare they believe, it will accomplish the aim in view. The mechanism of the machinery is the most simple, and the boys and girls are all employed in the work. The net of a day's work may bring about 10 or 15 cents. In some respects this movement is one of the most unique ever witnessed, and there is certainly nothing more curious in the twentieth century. It is a badge of the highest honor to be seen working one of the spinning wheels, and Mr. Gandhi has urged that every school controlled by the Nationalists shall be devoted entirely to the spinning of Indian yarn."

Gandhi Has Support of Congress and Labor Union

Gandhi has behind him the Indian National Congress and also the All-India Trades Union Congress. The latter is organizing the Indian workers in all the trades and industries. The president of the last National Congress talked openly of "paralyzing British industries for the self-preservation of India." Gandhi's policy of non-violent non-cooperation has therefore a side which isn't at all passive.

Many Indian women of note have also enlisted in the non-cooperation crusade. Among them are Gandhi's wife, Sreenati Kasturba; the poetess Sarojini-Naidu; Mrs. Anusuyabai, the social worker; and the feminist leaders Lila Singh, Begum Atiya Fyzee-Khanum and Sarala Devi.

The British government has pulled through many critical situations in India. But the one it faces now is perhaps more threatening than any other because of the non-resistant character of many of its aims and of the intellectual subtleties and spiritual appeal of its leadership. India worships the visionary strain in Gandhi. But that strain is evidently combined with a counter strain of intense practicality and keen political opportunism.



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